‘Secrets’ and ‘The Taste of Watermelon’ are two short stories that are worth comparing. The two stories have many things that are similar when seen from faraway but have points that differ from each other when looked closely. One main thing they both have in common are that they are both stories which an incident completely changes the relationships with an elder. The different things are that how the main character reacts to the action he does and how he thinks of it at the end.

Between the two stories, the relationship with the elder is something that differs from each other.

In ‘Secrets’ the main character is very close and familiar to the elder, in this story it is referred as ‘Great Aunt Mary’. There is one scene that significantly shows this;

Her grandmother had given it to her as a brooch and she had had a ring made from it. He would try to count back to see how old it was. Had her grandmother got it from HER grandmother? And if so what had she turned it into?

This shows the main character’s interest towards the aunt and a want to know even know about his mysterious aunt. After breaking promises with the aunt and reading the letter though, the main character and the elder’s relationship breaks and is never made up, or nobody tried to make it up. The main character regrets of his action, it is shown by him not saying anything to the insults the elder tells him, for example telling him that ‘you are dirt’. However, even though the elder ‘struck him across the side of the face’ and told him that he will ‘always will be dirt’ to her, she still seems to forgive him. Or at least it seems as though she did. Additionally, there is a part where the main character’s aunt keeps on loosening the crucifix she was holding. This is shown in the following quotation;

They had tried to wrap her fingers around a crucifix but they kept loosening.

This is showing how the aunt did not want to die yet. The crucifix is a sign of death. Not grabbing the symbol of death means that the aunt yet has something undone before she wants to die. And this ‘something’ may be the fact that she wants to apologize to the main character for the things she has said. One evidence she had that thought, is the fact that the aunt never told about the main character’s mother for what he have done.

Shown above, the story ‘Secrets’ has a sort of friendship between the main character and the elder, where they both hate each other after an incident, but still trying to recover them. However, the situation between the main character and the elder is a little different in ‘The Taste of Watermelon’.

Amongst the main character and his other friends, the main character was the only one who was able to commit the incident of stealing a watermelon. This was because the main character was new to the area; he did not know the fearfulness of Mr. Wills as much as the others. The main character gains information from those who fear the elder. A sort of a chaotic incident then occurs. This incident was expected to make a very bad relationship between the main character and the elder, but the expectation was wrong. When Mr. Wills found about the lost melon, he ‘lift the shotgun over his head’ and ‘his voice crying out again in a terrible, surging yell of pain and anger’. He should’ve been extremely depressed at himself, and felt anger to the stealer; who was the main character. The main character’s guilt is shown as following;

But stealing this great seed melon from a man like Mr. Wills lay outside the safe magic of the tacit understanding between man and boy. And I knew it was up to me, at whatever risk, to repair as well as I could the damage I had done.

He then makes up for the mistakes he have done. This is the part where it is different from ‘Secrets’. In ‘Secrets’ none of them tried to repair for the things they did. This resulted them to gain a very hostile (yet somewhat feeling some remorse). But in ‘The Taste of Watermelon’, this action of repairing made a positive friendship between the elder and him, as well as with Willadean.

The two stories also differ on method of explanation and the points of view. In ‘Secrets’ it is mostly consisting of the portrait of the scenery. It is written in third person, but with some descriptions of a first person. Contrasting to that, in ‘The Taste of Watermelon’ they mostly consist of the other’s actions and the words they say. This is written in a complete first person.

In ‘Secrets’ it is written in third person, although the speaker is actually the main character in the story. This is because he was feeling too sinful for the actions he has done, too regretful to tell it as though it was his own story. This is shown where his ‘tears came into his eyes for the first time since she had died and he cried silently into the crook of his arm for the woman who had been his maiden aunt’. Then, he thinks ‘she might forgive him’. He notices the largeness of the offence he committed, and feels guilty for it.

In ‘The Taste of Watermelon’ though, the story ends with the main character not feeling regretful but rather hopeful. This was why the speaker, or the main character, was able to write it in first person. The feeling of the main character is clearly shown in many places, especially where he feels hopeful. One example of this is the following;

I felt my heart give a great thump in my chest.

Because this story ended with hopeful feelings, the speaker was even able to explain the main character’s feelings even when he was committing the crime, and also when feeling guilty for that.

In ‘Secrets’ the motif object is ‘Irises’. In the quotation below shows how the iris flowers die neatly;

On the table was a cut-glass vase of irises, dying because she had been in bed for over a week. He sat staring at them. They were withering from the tips inward, scrolling themselves delicately, brown and neat. Cleaning up after themselves.

This death of the iris flower shows how his aunt is dying. She too, is withering, shrinking and becoming smaller. In this story, the motif object is a symbol of one of the main event that occurs in it; the death of the aunt.

However in ‘The Taste of watermelon’, the motif object is the ‘moon’. When the main character and his two friends go swimming at night, there are numerous descriptions about the moon and its moonlight.

We were all exited by the moonlight

The big old moon sailed serenely overhead, climbing higher into the sky

They are two quotations that describe the moon. From the olden days, moon was seen as sign of lunacy. The reader must’ve felt something has changed within the three characters, especially the main character. All the plans for stealing the watermelon ended up just as ‘talks’, but under this moonlight, he decided to steal them planlessly. In this story, the motif ‘moon’ is shown as a sort of a cause to the crime the main character chose to do.

In these three different points, the two stories ‘Secrets’ and ‘The Taste of Watermelon’ differ very much. Looking at it from far away, they seem like similar stories, but actually they were quite different.